DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 864 SO 015 650

AUTHOR	Kane, Jeffrey
TITLE	In Fear of Freedom: Public Education and Democracy in America. Proceedings Number 38.
INSTITUTION	Myrin Inst., Inc., New York, N.Y.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-913098-42-6
PUB DATE	84
NOTE	51p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The Myrin Institute for Adult Education, 136 East 64th Street, New York, NY 10021 ($3.00).
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120) -- Books (010)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Freedom; *Democracy; Educational History; Educational Philosophy; Educational Theories; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Regulation; Futures (of Society); Government School Relationship; Institutional Autonomy; *Intellectual Freedom; *Public Education; Public Schools; Relevance (Education); State Church Separation
IDENTIFIERS	Dewey (John); Mann (Horace); National Commission on Excellence in Education; Skinner (B F)

ABSTRACT

This examination of the inconsistencies between public education and democracy in America proposes "individual freedom of intellect and belief" through the educational empowerment of individual families and through government deregulation of school content. Following an introduction and information about the author, the book focuses on seven topic areas: (1) the question of educational quality and possible dangers implicit in recent recommendations made by the National Commission on Excellence in Education; (2) the risk of democracy, warning that an educational system inconsistent with democracy could destroy the ideals it was meant to preserve; (3) an historical look at fundamental aspects of American democracy and the individual conscience; (4) the reform of public schooling over the past 150 years, examining the theories of Horace Mann and John Dewey; (5) the theory that education cannot be value-neutral, challenging theorists, such as B. F. Skinner, who advocate the transformation of education into a purely objective science; (6) Thomas Jefferson's concept of a wall that should separate church and state, proposing that separation of school and state would preserve freedom of intellect and belief in much the same way that separation of church and state preserves religious freedom; and (7) proposals for a universal independent education in which the best features of both public and private sectors are combined. (LH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED244864

Jeffrey Kane

In Fear of Freedom

Public Education and Democracy in America

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Olivia L. Gilliam
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 015 650

Proceedings
Number 38
The Myrin Institute

2

The Myrin Institute, Inc.
for Adult Education
136 East 64th Street
New York, New York 10021

Founders
H.A.W. Myrin
Franz E. Winkler

President
M.G.H. Gilliam

Proceedings is published periodically by the Myrin Institute in an effort to examine important issues of our time and to stimulate creative thinking about them. The views expressed by authors do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute itself.

Table of Contents

I About the Author

II Introduction by Stephen Arons

III In Fear of Freedom

Focusing the Question

The Risk of Democracy

American Democracy and the Individual Conscience

Education and Democracy

Education and the Image of Man

Jefferson's Wall

Universal Independent Education

IV References

Proceedings Number 38

Copyright © 1984 The Myrin Institute, Inc.
ISBN 0-913098-42-6

Introduction

Jeffrey Kane's presentation of *In Fear of Freedom* is traditional and conservative; but his conclusions will nonetheless be labeled radical. By invoking America's most hallowed ideological commitment—individual freedom of intellect and spirit—to question the legitimacy of its most pervasive institution—public schooling—Professor Kane has risked that special wrath that a democratic society reserves for its most perceptive critics. Because this informed, informative, and persuasive essay proceeds along a reasoned path to an unpopular conclusion, the serious reader may wish to begin with a reminder of how majoritarianism can preempt critical thought. Alexis de Tocqueville's 1830 insight into democracy in America still applies:

> In America the majority raises formidable barriers around the liberty of opinion; within these barriers an author may write what he pleases, but woe to him if he goes beyond them. . . . The master no longer says: "You shall think as I do or you shall die"; but he says: "You are free to think differently from me and to retain your life, your property, and all that you possess; but you are henceforth a stranger among your people." (p. 274, Vol. 1, Democracy in America, Random House, 1945).

Professor Kane ought not to become a stranger among us, both because there is so much truth in his assertion that government control of public schools is inconsistent with democracy, and because he has reached this conclusion from premises located firmly within

the bedrock traditions of American thought. He leads us by historical and philosophical steps to consider that a central American institution combines with a quintessential American belief to form an hypocrisy. This hypocrisy can be dissolved either by making public schools as independent as their private counterparts, as Professor Kane suggests, or by recanting our commitment to individual freedom and dignity, as B.F. Skinner has apparently suggested. Kane makes it clear that the price in the long run of ignoring this painful contradiction will be the loss of both public education and freedom and dignity.

In Fear of Freedom is historically revealing—especially in its portrayal of the genius and the blindness of leaders in education like Horace Mann and John Dewey. Professor Kane invites us to understand the reform of public schooling over the past 150 years as a repeating cycle of futile attempts to use government to manipulate individual conscience and to recreate society from the top down. This analysis is not simply good history, it is of great current importance to those who do not wish to be condemned to repeat history because they do not understand it. Today's education reformers—more likely to be commissions and special interest groups than illustrious individuals—are already demonstrating that we are once again on the rising curve of the cycle of using schools to manipulate conscience. As the public, whose support these commissions and politicians seek, ponders what is wrong with our schools, it may be that *In Fear of Freedom* will provide a perception clear enough to break the cycle of self-defeating school reforms and make changes that will endure.

As things stand now, however, every event from school board meeting to court hearing has become a scene for repetitive struggles over the curriculum, goals, textbooks, and standards of schooling. And just as individual families have struggled to influence their children's schooling, so have educators and politicians of various stripe tried to crystallize these struggles along the lines of their visions of national interest or social responsibility. The result is a bewildering array of values and visions vying for power. Diverse as these have been, they are grounded in two ideas: 1) that the prevailing culture is in a state of decay or collapse frightening enough to warrant political intervention; and 2) that government sponsored school socialization is a productive and appropriate method of creating good citizens and resurrecting culture.

The more accurate the first idea, the more widespread and

dangerous the second. That is why today's struggles over schooling contain the seeds of a deep social crisis. Many people whose conflicts with school officials have come to public light or have appeared in court records fear that the culture's values have become dysfunctional, that cultural assumptions no longer can be relied on to explain the past or predict the future. Into this apparently alienated, mystifying, and harsh world come children searching for meaning. Faced with this spectre of emptiness for their children, some parents are driven to try to use government power to impose meaning and values, to declare truth, and to establish a uniform conscience. At a time of cultural confusion, as Professor Kane sees, the question becomes whether public education or freedom of conscience can survive the attempt to make the "sphere of intellect and spirit" an arena of public conflict.

In the midst of the many personal and political struggles to use public schooling to recapture consensus, Kane's conclusions are likely to be regarded by some readers as an attack on public education. In my judgment, just the opposite is true. His is a plan for saving public education. The proposal for meaningful freedom of intellect and belief through the educational empowerment of individual families is perhaps the only workable way to prevent public schools from becoming so strife-ridden that they are rendered impossible to govern. Just as a separation of church and state written into the Constitution in 1789 has preserved freedom of religion and prevented the political system from being overloaded by conflicts of conscience, so a separation of school and state would preserve freedom of intellect and belief and save the education system from a similar conflict overload.

It is ironic that the argument to end government regulation of school content should be viewed as a threat by those who tout the public schools as a route to salvation for the poor and the victims of discrimination. In fact the absence of freedom in education is felt most keenly by these very people—families who cannot choose private schooling and therefore have little educational power of any kind. As long as educational choice is conditioned on economic status, the American system of education will be able to claim no more than that it provides freedom of choice for the rich and compulsory socialization for the rest. In light of the restrictive structure of American education, Professor Kane's argument should be seen not as an attack on public education, but as a hopeful

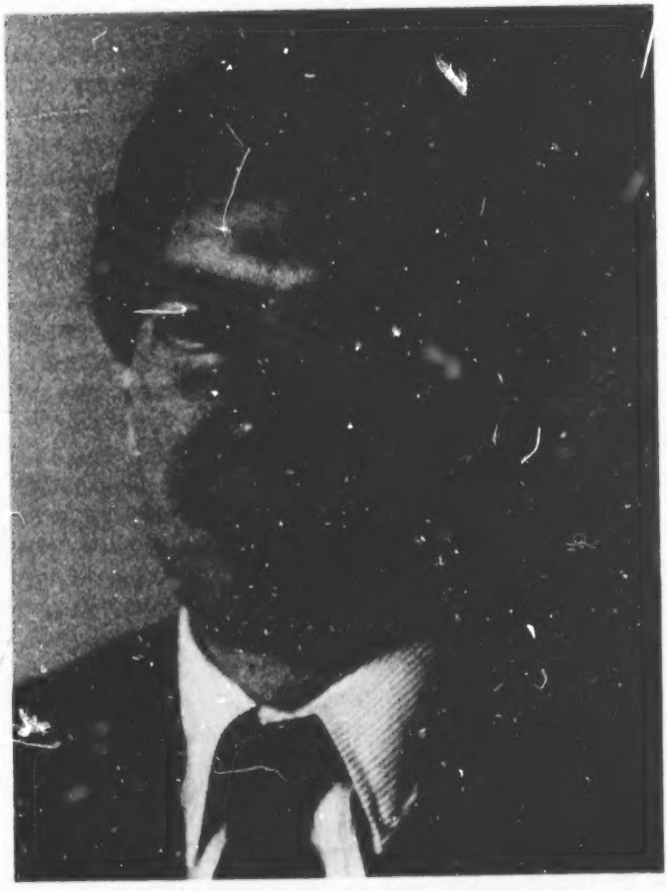
warning—there is still time to save public education from the threat of government schooling.

Stephen Arons
Director
Department of Legal Studies
University of Massachusetts

Stephen Arons is Director of the Department of Legal Studies at the University of Massachusetts. His recent book, *Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling* (McGraw-Hill, 1983), provides a penetrating analysis of the problematic relation between the First Amendment and public education in America.

In Fear of Freedom

Public Education and Democracy in America



Jeffrey Kane

10

About the Author

Jeffrey Kane is assistant professor of education at Adelphi University. He has a doctorate in educational philosophy from New York University where his dissertation focused upon the philosophy of science. His outstanding scholarship has earned him numerous honors and educational grants. Dr. Kane has published articles on educational philosophy in a variety of educational journals.

11

In Fear of Freedom

Focusing the Question

In a recently published booklet entitled *A Nation at Risk,* the National Commission on Excellence in Education published its findings on the state of American education. If the title does not adequately portray the Commission's findings, this conclusion on the first page of the text does: "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people."

Many state education offices have responded to the report by implementing some of the Commission's recommendations. In Florida, new high school graduation requirements are being instituted; in New York, the Board of Regents passed an "Action Plan" that requires students in public and private schools to take more courses in specified areas of study and to spend more time in school; in North Carolina, the school day has been lengthened 30 minutes and the school year 20 days. Local school boards also have responded, by revamping course offerings and reallocating resources.

Ironically, the Commission's recommendations and the fervent attempt to stem the "rising tide of mediocrity" may serve to compound rather than remedy the dangers that our current school system poses for American society. The emphasis on high, rigorous, and measurable academic standards, the "new basics," as well as elected officials' accountability for education, may actually decrease academic excellence, teacher effectiveness, and administrative responsiveness. Indeed, there is no reason to assume that students will be motivated to study because standards ar ised; the unsuccessful

Gates Program in New York City, which attempts to establish specific standards at various grade levels, provides a prime example of the failure of policymakers to take into account the key ingredient in the educational process—a student's own interest and involvement. Nor is there reason to believe that teachers will be more effective when their efforts are increasingly constricted by the obligatory batteries of standardized exams. Furthermore, it is not at all certain that a political figure atop a complex bureaucracy can effectively enforce a school's accountability.

The Commission's description of the state of American education is nearly indisputable; the consquences of our country's educational mediocrity are not overstated. However, the Commission provides a questionable basis for educational reform and also reinforces the misguided assumption that America's schools are a valid instrument for our government to use in coping with economic, social, and political problems. In its second paragraph, the report underlines this assumption by equating educational with governmental policy:

> If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. . . . We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge.*

It is clear that the Commission sees the schools as a governmentally directed aspect of our national defense.

The danger implicit in such a view is that government's increased superintendence of education in America is eroding the freedom of American families to direct their children's educational destinies in accordance with their fundamental beliefs and values. Education necessarily has a profound impact upon the growing child; to the degree that government—whether local, state, or federal—controls education, it imposes upon the mind of the child the stamp of its priorities.

Paradoxically, in our attempts to bolster democracy through the

*In 1958, the federal government passed the National Defense Education Act in an attempt to counterbalance the growth of Soviet technology; the successful launching of the space satellite Sputnik provided the rallying point for this legislation.

public school system, we are permitting the ideal of liberty slowly to erode. It is important for this reason to evaluate the proper relation of government to formal education in America. In responding to the technological, economic, and political challenges of the day we cannot and should not regard the ideals of American democracy merely as "noble rhetoric." Educational quality is necessary for our survival as a nation; educational freedom is necessary for our survival as a democracy.

But, one may ask, would schools be able to maintain high standards if government at a federal, state, and local level returned the control of a child's education to its parents? Would the withdrawal of government from public education lead to social fragmentation? Would separate economic, cultural, and religious groups establish themselves in isolation from one another? Would the racism now restrained by the Supreme Court ruling that bars segregated public schools be unleashed in schools and communities throughout the country? Would we, as a nation, be able to face the political and economic dangers noted by the Commission without a governmentally operated educational system?

These are vital questions, which must be considered carefully. However, there is little point in doing so until we have come to terms with this first and most basic issue: Are governmentally operated public schools appropriate in a democracy? The following essay attempts to provide an answer by focusing on the essential nature of education and of a democratic political system. It may well be that the great educational issues of our time can best be met where freedom is deemed to be essential, and that personal initiative and commitment are the ingredients needed to combat the malaise and inertia so evident in America's classrooms.

The Risk of Democracy

No state can survive the political, social, economic, and technological stresses of modern times without an educated citizenry. Whether a nation emphasizes its industrial future or its moral unity, one thing remains the same: its young will one day inherit the nation. The noted economist E.F. Schumacher writes:

> All history—as well as all current experience—points to the fact that it is man, not nature, who provides the primary resource: that the key factor of all economic development (as well as

> all other cultural development) comes out of the mind of man. . . . In a very real sense, therefore, we may say that education [which expands and guides the growth of the mind] is the most vital of all resources.[1]

All modern states have a vested interest in the education of their citizens. But perhaps no form of government is so crucially dependent upon education as democracy, if by democracy we mean not only government of, by, and for the people but also government that limits its own power in deference to the sovereignty of the individual over certain fundamental aspects of his own life. Where people can truly affect the functioning of the government, which is created to serve them, and where people have the freedom to shape their own beliefs, values, and goals, there is the ever present danger that individuals will make morally, socially, or politically destabilizing judgments. Consequently, in American democracy especially, education has been considered the bedrock upon which all else stands.

The father of the American public school, Horace Mann, wrote, "It may be an easy thing to make a Republic; but it is a very laborious thing to make Republicans."[2] "Any community," he warned, "whether nation or state, that ventures to organize a government, or to administer a government already organized, without making provision for the free education of all its children, dares the certain vengeance of Heaven. . . . "[3] He believed, as have the vast majority of American educational leaders after him, that the public school could provide the educational source needed to support and defend American democracy.

That it is government's responsibility to make quality education equally available to all is beyond dispute. We must ask, however, if it is consistent with the tenets of American democracy for government actually to operate a public school system. Is education a proper object of government supervision and control or, with its focus upon the human mind, is it one of those areas of life that should be protected from government interference? It would be a grave and tragic error to consider such a question merely academic, secondary to the daily practical problems facing American educators; for an educational system inconsistent with democracy could slowly and imperceptibly destroy the very ideals it was meant to preserve.

American Democracy and the Individual Conscience

To pursue this question, we must first gain an understanding of where the legitimate powers and rights of the government and the individual lie. For this purpose, let us consider some of the fundamental aspects of America's democracy.

The ideal of democracy was embraced by our Founding Fathers because they recognized and cherished the sovereignty and dignity of the individual. This recognition is expressed in the Declaration of Independence where its author, Thomas Jefferson, wrote of the "unalienable rights" of all men, and of the role of government: "To secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men. . . ." These Founding Fathers declared the colonies free from England, guided them through the Revolution and, having achieved liberty, tried to secure it by establishing a government. What they established in the way of institutions was devised to protect the transcendent freedom of the individual more than to assure him his daily bread.

As conceived by our forefathers, the individual was above all a free man. However, such a political union of free individuals produced a dichotomous role for its members: each person in addition to being free and accountable to his or her conscience, also became a citizen of a state, a member of a community, a part of a whole. Thus, in establishing a government our forefathers presumed a twofold nature of the individual—man as Man, and man as citizen. Accordingly, they established a twofold purpose for government institutions—to ensure the freedom of each individual as well as to respond to the needs of the citizenry as a whole.

American democracy, by its very nature, establishes the existence of a societal contract between government and the individual, and between government and the citizenry at large. The government undertakes to protect the freedom of the individual, in return for his support and his agreement to act with respect for the rights and dignity of others. In its dealings with the citizenry at large, the government agrees to treat all its members as equals. While the ideal of freedom arises from a sense of the intrinsic dignity and worth of the individual, the ideal of equality reflects the belief that this worth is not contingent upon his possessions or position, but rather upon his humanity alone.

The ideals of freedom and equality lie at the very foundation of American democracy; to understand them properly, it is necessary to recognize that they pertain to entirely different spheres of life. The

ideal of equality comes into play when individuals and institutions interact. Not that equality requires all such interactions to be prescribed by law; rather, limitations in the form of legal obligations are placed on both individuals and institutions. It is in relation to these limitations that all citizens are equal. In a democracy no one should be above the law, and no one beneath it: no one should be unprotected or disenfranchised.

Equality is a sociopolitical ideal based upon the presupposition that in matters of common concern society acts as one body. In sociopolitical matters all citizens are equal. All citizens are also faceless. They are individuals whose inner goals, beliefs, and strivings are without particular significance. Individual conscience is secondary to public consensus; individual preferences and goals must defer to the rulings of the majority and the fundamental precepts underlying government and law.

Counterbalancing the anonymity of the individual in sociopolitical matters is the ideal of individual freedom. Democracy is not merely a form of government based upon the "will of the people" or a vehicle designed for social management; it is also an expression of a single uncompromising belief in the inviolable freedom and dignity of the individual in matters of personal belief, commitment, and value.

The ideal of freedom rightly belongs to that sphere of an individual's existence where he sets his own course with destiny, a domain described by Supreme Court Justice Jackson as "the sphere of intellect and spirit."[4] Our government institutions have as their first task the securing of man's freedom within this sphere, where individual conscience is the sovereign authority. This freedom for the most part stands above the power of the body politic. Society may not legislate beliefs, values, or goals even if individual choice heightens the risk of social and political difficulties.

Freedom of individual conscience not only gives a person the right to think as he will, but also the right, although somewhat more limited, to act upon his convictions. The Constitution says as much. Those rights protected by the First Amendment permit one to *practice* a self-chosen religion, *speak* one's mind, and *assemble* peacefully in groups. And in Cantwell v. Connecticut the High Court held that the state's power to regulate must be exercised so as not to infringe on constitutionally protected conduct[5]—those actions arising primarily within the "sphere of intellect and spirit."

In his investigations into the First Amendment Professor Stephen Arons, one of the nation's leading scholars in the question of government control of public education, concludes that "the freedom or power guaranteed by the First Amendment would be meaningless if government had within its legal power to dictate the desires, values, aspirations, world views, or ethics of individuals seeking to exercise these freedoms or powers."[6] Arons cites the majority opinion written by Justice Douglas in Griswold v. Connecticut: "The right of freedom of speech and press includes not only the right to utter or print, but the right to distribute, the right to receive, the right to read [citations omitted], and freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, freedom to teach [citations omitted]. . . . Without these peripheral rights the specific rights would be less secure."[7]

Decisions arising within the sphere of human freedom are, however, not without social bearing. You and I live in a world with other people, and our actions affect them. The intellectual-spiritual sphere and the sociopolitical sphere interact in that judgments arising within the former are enacted in the latter, or vice versa. The nineteenth century scholar Frederick Grimke wrote:

> I do not know that any precise line can be drawn between those actions which affect the public weal and those which have a relation to private persons only. For as no system of legislation can avoid interfering to some extent with the conduct of individuals, so there is no scheme of private conduct but what may affect the whole community.[8]

The distinction between the spheres of freedom and equality can be illustrated with a modern example. Several years ago the American Nazi party decided to march through the streets of Skokie, Illinois. Countless individuals believed the Nazi ideology to be so abhorrent and anti-American that the march should be prohibited. Such a prohibition, however, would have required the courts to proscribe an otherwise legal action solely on the basis of the perceived worth of the underlying ideas. To do so would have intruded upon the sphere of intellect and spirit. Unfortunate as it may be that people should subscribe to the Nazi ideology, it would have violated the very foundations of our democracy for the state to have denied these individuals the right to express their convictions. The permit to march was, quite rightly, issued.

Let us imagine, on the other hand, that one of the Skokie marchers, acting on his convictions, engaged in racist housing or hiring practices. Here the conscience of the individual must be subordinate to the voice of the majority, for here his actions belong to a different sphere. Housing and hiring are sociopolitical matters; they come under the purview of a legal system that must discount race, creed, color, or religion in its considerations. Equality before the law presumes that the citizen is anonymous and the public uniform. Discriminatory practices are rightly seen as fundamental violations of the social contract.

The key to forming a judgment in accord with the democratic ideals of freedom and equality is to discern clearly where the case at issue falls: within the sphere of intellect and spirit, or within the sociopolitical sphere. Personal preference must never enter into consideration, and social expediency only rarely: the Supreme Court has ruled that government must show "overriding state interest" if it is to intrude into the sphere of intellect and spirit. This is for good reason: When government enters this sphere, tyranny can ensue; conversely, anarchy can prevail when individual conscience is allowed to rule the sociopolitical sphere.

Such supposed ideals, it may be objected, are no more than the arguments that over the years have allowed the ruling class to perpetuate its own favored status to the detriment of the disadvantaged. The history of the United States is no doubt rife with injustice rationalized, even justified, by high-sounding motives. We must respond, however, that the anger and bitterness we may feel in reviewing American history arise not from the ideals our forefathers embraced, and we cherish, but from their perversion. Our task has been to clarify these concepts so that we may not again distort and misuse them.

Education and Democracy

The sphere of intellect and spirit has been perhaps most effectively defended from government encroachment in the area of religious freedom. There was a time when the Founding Fathers heatedly debated whether or not to establish a state religion in order to achieve uniformity of mind. Jefferson, however, and others with him, believed that government could mandate no such thing. Jefferson placed his faith in free inquiry and study as the means for individual enlightenment: "[Where] reason and experiment have been

indulged . . . error has fled before them. It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself."[9] The inviolability of free religious belief and expression was subsequently enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

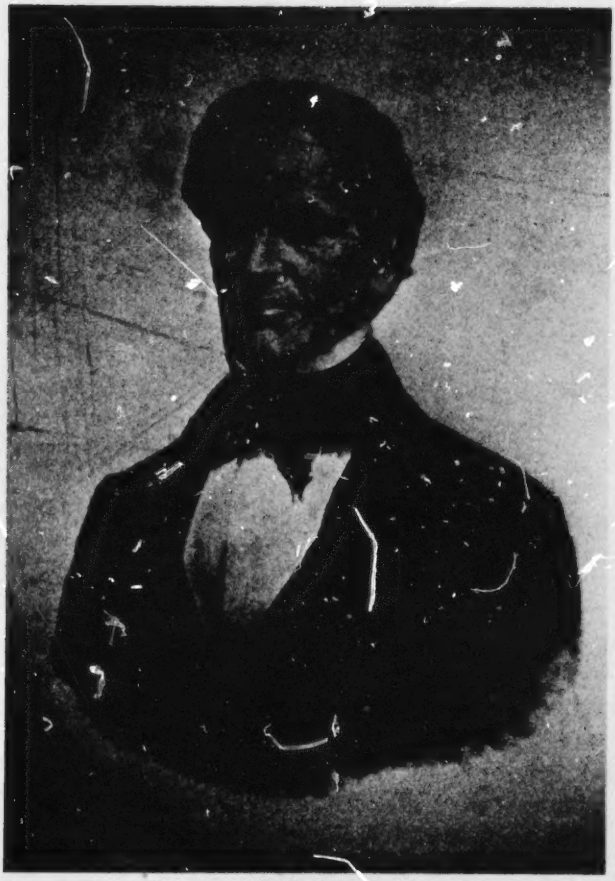
The field of education, however, has not fared similarly. If we look back over the history of education in this country, we find that not only was Jefferson's faith in the individual's right and ability to enlighten himself rejected, but also attempts were made to mandate a uniform point of view so as to counter the possibility of dissent and social divisiveness. After Jefferson's death in 1826, influential elements within America focused on the dangers inherent in a free-thinking society. Instead of supporting and protecting the individual's right to follow his own conscience, they acted to restrict freedom of thought because of their fear of social fragmentation, a fear heightened by the flood of immigrants entering the country and by changes wrought in cities through the rise of manufacturing and industry. The educational historian Richard Pratte explains that, "industrialization, urbanization, immigration, . . . were not merely concepts to be pondered in the abstract but were forces recently unleashed that produced profound alterations in human experience. These new forces generated broad political, social and economic conflicts. . . ."[10]

The question that preoccupied political leaders and educators was how American society could continue to function as an integral whole. Their answer: through the inculcation of a common faith and understanding, just the opposite of what Jefferson had maintained. Social and political leaders began to see the common school as *the* stabilizing element in American society. Horace Mann, the father of public education in America, perhaps presented this position most clearly.*

In 1844, Mann was responsible for the establishment and

---

*It must be noted that public education was not popular in the southern states. Southern aristocrats educated their children privately while the rural poor were unable to muster the economic resources to support public schools. Some "pauper schools" were maintained in the larger population centers but were educationally inadequate at best. It was not until after the Civil War when northern teachers came to the south—following on the heels of the Yankee army—that public schools began to emerge there. With Reconstruction, the Populist movement, and the economic power of northern industrialists, public education spread throughout the South.



Courtesy, History of Education Quarterly / New York University

Horace Mann

operation of the first common schools, schools that could inculcate a universally shared set of beliefs and values. He envisioned the common schools as "the center and circumference of a great circle of benevolence."[11] The basis of the great circle was a common moral system, the tenets of which had been culled from various Protestant sects; this system was to be instilled into school children. The area within the circumference marked the social harmony that could be expected from a population educated in the Protestant-oriented philosophy offered by the common schools.

Mann felt that beliefs and values of a specific Protestant denomination did not belong in the schools but thought that it was possible, indeed absolutely necessary, to devise a balanced system of beliefs that was secular in nature but drawn from the religions in Massachusetts where he lived—in other words, Mann wanted to create a universally acceptable body of biblical doctrine. This common philosophy was intended to be the basis for a common culture and was expected to lead ultimately to a uniformity of viewpoint that would assure the Republic's future well-being.

In Mann's view the common schools would create "a more far-seeing intelligence and purer morality than has ever existed among communities of men."[12] These schools would minister to the needs of society and respect the rights of the individual by offering a philosophy that was based upon universal precepts; since all the denominations were equally represented, Mann reasoned, everyone would freely commit himself to his, Mann's, Protestant distillations.

It was also Mann's assumption that the Bible presented a clear and objective image of man and contained insight into the foundations of moral conduct. Because they inculcated a biblically based philosophy, schools were intended "to give the advantages of preoccupancy and a stable possession to fraternal feelings against the alienating competitions of subsequent life."[13]

Mann established the first public schools upon a spiritual concept of humanity and nature. The central justification for public education was that it interpreted the Word of God so that all citizens could, together, abide by His law. Publically educated individuals, it was believed, would identify themselves with the God-given universal moral precepts taught in the public schools rather than with particular secular interests or priorities. It was argued that all individuals thus educated would recognize their divine affinity with all others and act with selfless beneficence.

In looking back to Mann, the question arises as to how an educational system of the kind he envisioned could exist within the constraints of the nonestablishment clause of the Constitution. Mann's answer was quite simple: "Public philosophy" was biblically derived but nondenominational; it did not, therefore, favor or establish any Protestant sect. Religion was narrowly defined by Mann as sectarianism, and as the public schools were not sectarian, they were not considered religious. One of the major claims for public education at that time was that while parochial schools inculcated varied sectarian values, the public schools could unify all citizens with their "universally accepted" biblical teachings. Public school advocates argued further that whereas private academies lacked spiritual and theistic value, the public schools had a firm commitment to the Bible.

For our purposes, the critical factor in Mann's work is his successful promotion of an educational system based upon a Protestant-oriented philosophy of life, not the validity or speciousness of his contentions. In essence he was able to argue successfully that democracy was endangered by the freedom of the individual mind, and would be so long as the public did not attempt to mandate a universal, biblically derived set of values and beliefs. Mann was supported by the large Protestant population in Massachusetts at that time, and it was because of this support that he was able to achieve his aims. Despite the differences between the various Protestant sects, the biblical selections culled and used by Mann were thoroughly acceptable. He could boast, ironically, that public education recognized its "religious obligations in their fullest extent; that it was a system which invoked a religious spirit, and could never be fully administered without such a spirit."[14]

Mann's common schools were able to claim their central position in democracy only so long as Protestantism continued to be the nearly universal religious belief in Massachusetts and other states. This situation was to change, however.

In his discerning and detailed analysis of the post-Civil War era, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education, 1865-1965,* Professor Henry Perkinson provides a vivid account of the transitions in American society and culture. He demonstrates how the continued expansion in technology, industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, and the diminution of religion in people's daily lives resulted in social chaos, especially in the cities. As factories sprang up

on the fringes of preindustrial cities like Boston and Philadelphia, rural peoples—principally impoverished farmers and their children—streamed into these industrial centers where workers were needed. Here they clustered together with immigrant communities. The changes from a rural to an urban setting, from farm to factory, from life among their countrymen to living with foreigners, were disorienting. Most unsettling, perhaps, was the factory system itself. It alienated the laborer from his work and exposed him to inhumane working conditions, from which he had no recourse.

In response to this disorientation and exploitation, factory workers began to think for themselves. Influenced by the scientific mode of thought and knowledge that was gaining popularity, they focused upon practical, industrial, economic, and social issues. Pragmatic theories of human nature, as well as social and personal priorities, replaced traditional religious teachings as the center of the life of the working man. Darwin's *Origin of the Species* added fuel to the fires that brought about a new way of thinking and new ideas.

Furthermore, the changes taking place in cities had a profound effect on family life and, hence, on traditional patterns of education. Because wages were low, whole families, including children, sometimes worked twelve-hour days, six days a week. Under these circumstances parents could not properly oversee and guide their children; the young, as a result, were raised through exposure to the harsh realities of factories and urban life. Eventually legislators countered the problem by enacting child labor and compulsory education laws.

The solution to problems in one sector, however, created problems in another—the public education system. With passage of each new education law, there came a drastic increase in the numbers of children of both immigrants and rural Americans attending public schools. For the most part, these children were not educated by their parents in matters of practical and social life, such as the conventions of an industrial economy and a rapidly changing society. The schools were thus forced to shift their emphasis—from inculcating a common moral viewpoint to instilling some of the essential values necessary for citizenship in a democracy. As the absorbing demands of work reduced the socializing role of parents, public schools assumed this function and became a separate institutional society within the larger social structure.

There were people who recognized what was happening in

society at large and in the schools in particular and, like Horace Mann at an earlier time, sought to guide these changes to promote social unity. If the public schools were going to fulfill this new function properly, they would have to provide practical skills and a new and responsive system of values. Horace Mann's concepts were no longer useful given the new demand placed upon public schools: that education serve as an agent of social reform in an increasingly industrialized society.

It was in this context that a great reformer of public education in America, John Dewey (1859-1952), began his activity. During his long life he attempted to change America's schools into agents of social progress. Like Mann, he maintained that public schools could provide a common center of faith, a common sphere of socially based ethical values. Unlike Mann, Dewey strongly rejected the spiritual conceptions of humanity and of the world expressed in the Judeo-Christian traditions of Western culture. He held that a theistic religious attitude could exist if, and only if, it

> would surrender . . . commitment to beliefs about matters of fact, whether physical, social or metaphysical [to empirical science]. . . . [Neither could] it substitute in their place fixed beliefs about values, save the one value of the worth of discovering the possibility of the actual and striving to realize them.[15]

He further insisted that "Nature may not be worshipped as divine even in the sense of the intellectual love of Spinoza."[16]

Dewey maintained that society's adherence to transcendent conceptions, with their attendant value systems, served only to delay its acceptance of the one tool that could guide individual and social conduct: the scientific method. He argued that all questions, both moral and practical, were in fact social in nature and should be examined systematically. The idea of fixed values and moral standards was rejected as arbitrary and socially maladaptive. According to Dewey, "ultimately the question of values and a standard of values is the moral question of the organization of interests of life."[17] In *Experience and Nature* he stated, "Values are as unstable as forms of clouds."[18] And in *Democracy and Education* he wrote that "health, wealth, efficiency, sociability, utility, culture, happiness itself are only abstract terms which sum up a multitude of particulars . . . they are

not in any true sense standards of valuation."[19]

Dewey believed that science, once directed toward social aims, could become the ultimate deity presiding over human affairs. He proclaimed:

> . . . science that is put to distinctively human use is that in which warranted ideas about the non-human world are integrated with emotion as human traits. In this integration not only is science itself a value . . . but *it is the supreme means of all valuations in all aspects of human and social life.*[20] [Italics added]

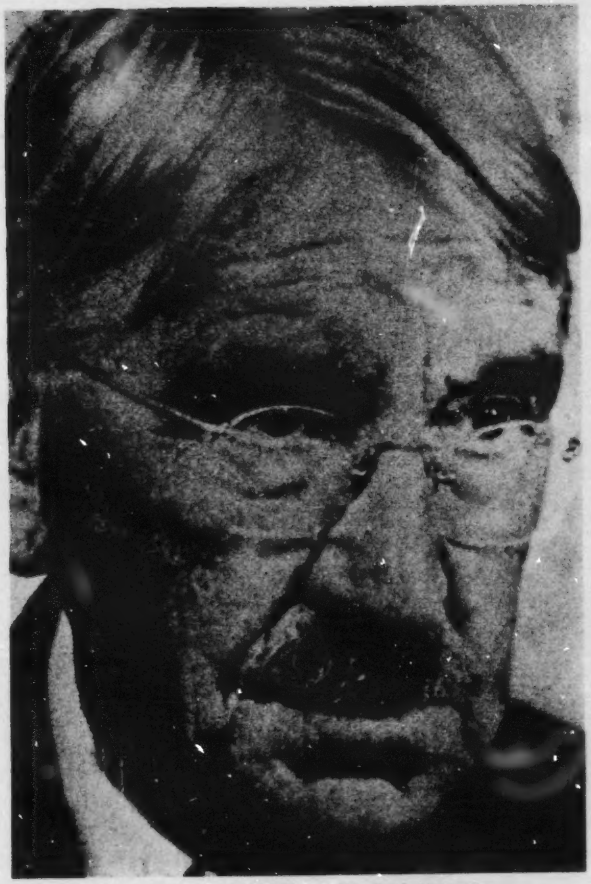
Dewey exhorted the public to devote itself to a common faith in scientific method. He believed that through a scientific analysis of social conditions, individuals would come to identify themselves with societal goals.

> I should describe this faith as the unification of the self through allegiance to inclusive ideal ends, which [scientific] imagination presents to us and to which human will responds as worthy of controlling our desires and choices.[21]

The public schools were to attempt to inculcate a scientifically based valuation *process* rather than specific values. It was believed that individuals so educated would develop flexible yet socially beneficial values responsive to changing social conditions.

Thus Dewey, though philosophically worlds apart from Mann, nonetheless followed in Mann's footsteps in harnessing education to perceived social needs. His ideas, like Mann's, infringed on the rights of the individual, for he maintained that the state, through its schools, should mold the intellectual and spiritual life of its citizenry. He left no doubt as to his aims:

> Why should we longer suffer from the deficiency of religion? We have discovered our lack: let us set the machinery in motion which will supply it. We have mastered the elements of physical well-being, we can make light and heat to order, and can command the means of transportation. Let us now put a similar energy, good will, and thoughtfulness into control of the things of the spiritual life. Having got so far as to search for



Courtesy, History of Education Quarterly / New York University

John Dewey

> proper machinery, the next step is easy. Education is the modern universal purveyor, and upon the schools shall rest the responsibility for seeing to it that we recover our threatened religious heritage.[22]

Dewey knew that his belief in the scientific method as the supreme basis for moral judgments was comparable to the most devout churchman's faith in the Bible. He did not realize, however, that when mandated in state-run schools his pedagogy overextended the powers of the body politic and seriously infringed on individual liberty. The sphere of intellect and spirit was denied its transcendental status by a science that denied the possibility of its existence. Whereas moral valuation had once been a matter of individual conscience, it was now a matter of public consensus; whereas it had once been a matter of personal belief, it was now one of majority rule.

Dewey's exhortations for a common faith in science, like Mann's homilies for a common biblical philosophy, invaded the sphere of intellect and spirit and thereby weakened the tenets of democracy. As had Mann, Dewey undermined the individuals sovereignty over his own beliefs and values by using a public institution to instill moral values.

To complicate matters further, Dewey's theories regarding the nature and function of public education proved far less practicable than he had hoped; as a result, they were twisted and turned to fit particular situations or to meet the interests of particular groups. Where Dewey prized the practical, social value of critical thinking, for example, many leaders of government and industry encouraged docility and conformity in the young as the means to personal and social success. Because educators were responsive to the thinking and wishes of these leaders, classroom practice was often based as much on their views as on Dewey's.

Eventually these social, political, and economic influences transformed the very nature of public education. The noted educational historians Edgar Gumbert and Joel Spring conclude that the public schools eventually

> were seen as authority- and consensus-building agencies. They were given the task of cultivating in young people the attitudes, values, and skills that both the nation-state and the techno-

> structure required for their continued power. Obedience, loyalty, efficiency, dedication and order served the interests of both the political and the economic systems. The schools taught them and they thereby legitimized those systems.[23]

Individualized instruction, testing, and tracking systems expanded geometrically in the effort to tap the full resources of the nation's youth. The public, however, generally believed that such educational developments responded to their needs and offered increased chances for future economic success. The concept of the school as the foundation for cohesive communities faded out of sight. The priority for the individual was socioeconomic mobility; the priority for social planners was a stable, productive source of qualified labor.

Still other forces were shaping the further evolution of American public education. Before the turn of the century there was little distinction between the government that operated the schools and the public these schools served. The majority of schools were simple one-room structures whose buildings and activities were controlled by communities having a common cultural, religious, or ethnic background. Parents had great influence on the hiring and firing of teachers, the selection of texts, and the curricula. By 1900 this situation had changed drastically. Public schools in many of the industrial centers that were then springing up were overcrowded, unsanitary, poorly lighted, and staffed by unqualified teachers. To improve conditions, professional educators and social reformers cried out for more direct governmental supervision over education. State governments took the initiative and throughout the country began to regulate public school curricula and teacher certification, as well as health and safety requirements. In subsequent years school districts were centralized under the state to facilitate their control and economic management. Parents' control and involvement in their children's education diminished.

This was especially true in cities, where many citizens eyed with fear the vast numbers of immigrants unfamiliar with American customs and politics. Perkinson explains:

> [The immigrants'] tendency to vagrancy and crime, their undemocratic backgrounds, and their lack of understanding of American

> institutions made them a menace to the city, if not the nation itself. The newcomers were intemperate, illiterate and ignorant; they lived in filth and wallowed in corruption. But most frightening of all: they were breeding![24]

Social reformers and public education officials assumed the task of Americanizing these masses. American values and goals were to be taught along with the skills necessary for the economic marketplace. Pratte notes that

> such schooling would reconcile the economy's need to import peasant European labor, whose social relations of production and derivative culture had to be made over to become compatible with industrial wage-labor and with the need for a uniform American in step with the rest of American society.[25]

Parental influences were seen as encumbrances rather than aids to the educational process. However, neither the immigrant population nor the urban poor perceived the public school system as a threat to their individual liberties. On the contrary, most viewed the public school as a godsend. To immigrants, for example, public education was a symbol of American egalitarianism, a prime pathway for assimilation into the promised land. To the nation's poor it was a shining hope, the longed-for means of their children's deliverance from poverty. For them to reject public education would have been like a hungry man refusing bread.

The poor person's vision of upward mobility and the immigrant's idealized image of America beclouded the question of just what education could and should achieve. Few immigrants knew specifically what "American" goals, values, and educational priorities were, if any general agreement about these things was even possible. Few of the poor had any clear idea of the attitudes, skills, and personal characteristics with which education was to furnish them in order to help them climb the socioeconomic ladder.

As the decades passed, the public schools were subject to ever widening social, economic, and political concerns and a parallel increase in government involvement in their affairs. The schools responded to national priorities such as those outlined in Roosevelt's New Deal. Perkinson notes that Americans' "traditional fear of

government tyranny gave way to the greater fear for their own welfare and security—freedom from government seemed much less important than freedom from want."[26]

Eventually the schools were considered an extension of the government itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that the successful Soviet launching in 1957 of Sputnik, the first manned space vehicle, prompted passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA); this act led to the creation of new math, science, and foreign language curricula in schools throughout the United States. The federal government was intent on producing a generation of mathematicians, scientists, and foreign diplomats capable of meeting the perceived Soviet technological and political threat. And the schools were seen as the government's most powerful weapon in this effort.

By 1965, with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the federal government had greatly expanded its funding of and control over public education. The combined expenditures of the NDEA and the ESEA increased federal funding for education tenfold, from $375 million in 1958 to more than $4 billion in 1965. In order to receive some of the funds that had been made available, state governments had to respond to numerous federal guidelines. Because there was more paperwork, the states had to hire more personnel; personnel in state education departments "more than tripled in number between 1966 and 1970."[27]

The federal presence in education affected not only the size of state education departments and the amount of money they spent, but also their policies. In the late sixties and the seventies, reflecting federal priorities, these departments instituted teacher licensing procedures and evaluation methods throughout the country that utilized a single and highly debatable psychological theory. In response to the ESEA requirement for "appropriate objective measurements" as determined by the Commissioner of Education, B.F. Skinner's behavioristic psychological models of teaching and learning found their way into state educational mandates. Even though a Texas court ruled that it was improper for a state to impose one view of psychology on its citizenry, policies and procedures based on behavioristic theory still stand legally unchallenged in many states.

Events in recent years have continued to add to the growing government presence in education: creation of the Federal Department of Education; passage of the Education for All Handicapped

Children Act; and the ever more detailed specification of teacher certification requirements, of curriculum content, and of testing methods to measure achievement. Well-intentioned as these developments are, they all represent political power struggles over America's young. The argument is not for or against educational improvement, for or against the upgrading of the quality of our nation's teachers, for or against a proper education for handicapped children. The real issues are: Who is to decide what will improve a child's education; who is to decide what makes a good teacher; who is to decide what is best for individual children?

Local, state, and federal education officials have increasingly assumed the responsibility for deciding these and numerous other fundamental questions. They have boldly instituted educational methods, goals, values, models of knowledge, psychologies, and philosophies. Few citizens have recognized the erosion of their personal freedom to reflect and act upon these matters for themselves. As in our discussions of Horace Mann and John Dewey, we see once again that public education has intruded upon the "sphere of intellect and spirit."

The continued belief that schools simply are an extension of the government has permitted this intrusion to go unchecked. The two-fold nature of our democratic institutions has long since faded out of sight. The public schools have thus served less as a bastion of freedom than as a barrier against it.

Education and the Image of Man

We have seen that public education in America was designed—and continues still—to promulgate what government and educational reformers have considered desirable beliefs, attitudes, values, and life-goals. The intention of the foregoing discussion has been to illustrate the basic fact that American families no longer retain the influence on their children's education they once had. Despite the actions of local school boards or parent-teacher associations, individual parents have little influence over the teachers, textbooks, curricula, motivational techniques, class grouping systems, academic assessment instruments, or educational philosophies and psychological approaches involved in their child's education. The prudence of particular federal, state, or local governmental decisions about education is not at issue. What is, is the fact that the government has increasingly assumed responsibility for decisions so fundamental in a child's life.

The question we must now face is whether or not it is possible to avert any Constitutional issues concerning the proper role of government in the educational arena by establishing an education that neither sets forth nor prefers any beliefs, attitudes, goals, or values. If such a system is possible, it would properly and most effectively be administered within the public domain. If, however, we find that education necessarily involves matters of a spiritual-intellectual nature, then we must conclude that government-run education is inconsistent with the tenets of American democracy.

In an attempt to answer this question, let us consider the nature of the school's influence on its student body. When children attend school they not only learn what the teacher tells them and what they read in books: children also learn how to approach questions and what to look for when they observe themselves and the world around them; they learn to interact with others, to cooperate and compete, to look for beauty or utility, to approach with gratitude or indifference, to perceive in facts either chaos or a mysterious unity.

Schools help provide children with unspoken intellectual-spiritual roots that will mature into the explicit beliefs and values of their adult lives. No lesson can be taught without imparting at the same time the attitudes and convictions of the classroom teacher and to some extent also of the curriculum designer and textbook author. Whether consciously or not, they form the soil in which the roots of a child's mind will grow.

Rarely is this process explicit to the extent that one can point to a particular line in a text or a stated objective in a teaching plan. It is the context of the educational process, the atmosphere within which the child lives in the classroom. Every word a teacher utters carries an unspoken message in the enthusiasm or detachment of his voice, in his endorsement or rejection of an idea. Every classroom, with its wall decorations, seating arrangements, educational materials, and book selections, conveys an image of the world and of the child's place therein. Every curriculum is filled with assumptions about how children learn, as well as what and why they should learn. Such influences shape the very content of the child's mind.

Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the work of the noted Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner. Professor Skinner is a prime advocate of the transformation of education into a purely objective science. However, as we shall see, what he himself perceives as objectivity is itself based on spiritual-intellectual assumptions, and

not at all on "simple facts." Nevertheless, Professor Skinner is one of the most influential figures in contemporary American education. Throughout the nation many states have instituted requirements based on his concepts of teaching and learning, and numerous federal, state, and private educational funds require objectives and performance measures to be defined in Skinnerian terms.

Skinner begins his scientific and philosophic work with the supposition that science must deal only with those things that can be observed. Consequently he is concerned exclusively with the behavior of the individual, rather than with the thoughts, feelings, or purposes that underlie that individual's actions. Learning is thus held to consist of acquiring certain desired behaviors in response to specific stimuli, a process brought about by various positive or negative environmental reinforcers. It can be said, for example, that the student has learned the Pythagorian theorem if he has acquired the behavior of stating that $a^2+b^2=c^2$ when presented with stimuli requiring such an answer as the appropriate response. Education may then be defined simply as the gradual acquisition of a variety of desired behaviors through the use of reinforcers.

While it might appear that Skinner's approach is unassailable in its objectivity, the concepts that underlie it are in fact quite personal to Skinner and very far from universally accepted. In the first place, Skinner's concept of knowledge is positivistic and mechanical; for him, knowledge is a static and isolated behavior, no more than a conditioned response. There are, however, other models of knowledge that differ from Skinner's and are both practical and enlightening. The renowned physicist David Bohm maintains that knowledge is a form of insight, an interpretive framework that makes the world around us comprehensible: "... the proper order of operation of the mind requires an overall grasp of what is generally known, not only in formal, logical, mathematical terms, but also intuitively in images, feelings, poetic usage of language, etc."[28] Here knowledge is a fluid, personal understanding that enables us to bridge the gaps between the specific lessons we learn.

Another noted scientist and philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi, holds that knowledge is a personal skill that enables an individual to integrate experiences and observations into a unified, cohesive system of understanding. Polanyi maintains that it was a personal vision rather than specific, deductive logic that led Copernicus, Newton, Einstein, to their discoveries.

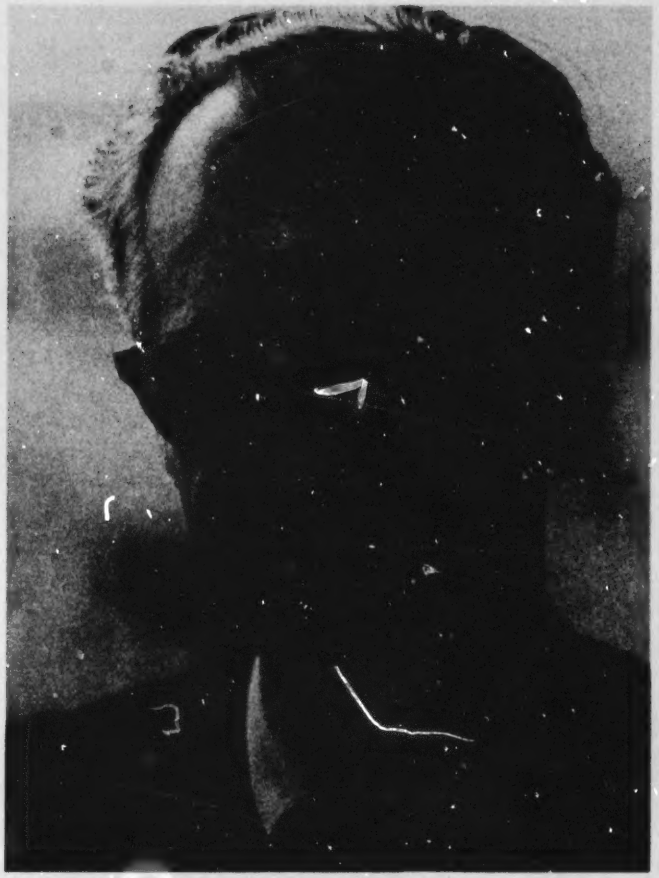


Photo Researchers, Inc.

B.F. Skinner 35

Both Bohm and Polanyi see knowledge as far more comprehensive than mere conditioned behavior. For both, knowledge is a personal, intellectual activity—in grammatical terms, more verb than noun. To know something is to use knowledge as one uses one's eyes. Knowledge that does not enable one to perceive or conceive with greater breadth or depth is not worthy of its name. To know something one must understand how it relates to all else that he sees around him. Skinner assumes that the world can be understood only by breaking it down into small and manageable parts. Others, like Bohm and Polanyi, stress the need to integrate knowledge into meaningful visions of the world.

Furthermore, Skinner's concept of the world is purely materialistic. In his opinion, that which cannot be observed does not exist; hence, God does not exist either in or beyond nature. Yet saints and prophets of all religions have testified to their personal experience of the divine, and have stressed that deep and abiding faith is the prerequisite to understanding spiritual reality. Neither Skinner nor the religious have "proven" their assertions; one man sees mechanism where another witnesses epiphany.

Consistent with his materialistic outlook, Skinner presumes self-interest to be the primary human motivation. A child does what is necessary to get what he wants; the teacher manipulates the classroom environment to elicit the response he deems to be desirable. There is no room in Skinner's world for individual responsibility and freedom. In his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity,* he writes:

> The picture which emerges from a scientific analysis is not of a body with a person inside, but of a body which *is* a person in the sense that it displays a complex repertoire of behavior. . . .
>
> . . . What is being abolished is autonomous man—the inner man, the homunculus, the possessing demon, the man defended by the literatures of freedom and dignity. . . .
>
> . . . Only by dispossessing him can we turn to the real causes of human behavior. Only then can we turn from the inferred to the observed, from the miraculous to the natural, from the inaccessible to the manipulatable.[29]

Skinner's particular perspective inevitably colors his educational goals. Instead of nurturing independent and self-directing human beings, education is meant to control human mechanisms and to shape them into units of a cohesive society. Human beings are incapable of self-direction and must be led; their values and goals cannot be freely chosen but must be determined for them. The only problem is a technical one: how to control people through positive rather than negative reinforcement, so that they neither recognize nor attempt to rebel against those manipulating them.

If Skinner's ideas were to prevail in this country our democratic government would have to be displaced by an authoritarian one, for in his world there is no freedom to defend, no inner sovereignty to be respected. Indeed, his denial of human freedom precludes the very existence of the "sphere of intellect and spirit," the natural arena of education. Ironically, public education in America is commonly believed to be the guardian of democratic values, even though the psychological and educational viewpoints on which government-run schools are largely based today deny the very possibility of democracy's existence!

In discussing Skinner's ideas we are not so much concerned with their validity as with the influences a teacher steeped in Skinner's philosophy, working within a Skinner-based school system, inevitably brings into the classroom. No child need be engaged in outright philosophical discussion; no word need be spoken explicitly about values or beliefs. Yet an image of humanity, of the world, of the individual's role in the fulfillment of his own destiny, cannot help but be conveyed through the teacher's attitude and convictions, and by the educational techniques he employs.

Nor, of course, is this profound influence confined to a Skinner-based pedagogy. All education necessarily teaches individuals how to make sense of their lives, how to set goals and make value judgments. In *Education and Morals,* Professor John L. Childs, a colleague of Dewey's, concludes:

> In fine, education is a value-conditioned activity. The school seeks to cultivate selected values in the young by means of both the subject matters and the methods that it emphasizes in its program.[30]
>
> As we have emphasized in all the foregoing, deliberate education is never morally neutral.

> A definite expression of preference for certain human ends, or values, is inherent in all efforts to guide the experience of the young.[31]
>
> Many of these educational values (those acquired through the experiences of the social aspects of the classroom as well as the attitude of the teacher) concern the very fundamentals of human existence.[32]

Professor Phenix of Columbia Teachers College says similarly:

> The essence of the curriculum—whether considered formally in schools or informally in other agencies of education—consists not of objective lessons to be learned and courses to be passed, but of the scheme of values, ideals, or life goals which are mediated through the materials of instruction. The really significant outcome of education is the set of governing commitments, the aims for living that the learner develops. The various subjects of study are simple means for the communication and appropriation of these values.[33]

Nevertheless, the attempt has been made by some educators to transform the school into a value-free forum where children are the ones to determine their own values. The Moral Value Education programs, including Values Clarification, Cognitive Moral Development, and Reflective Approaches, are currently being used in schools throughout the United States. These programs attempt to expand and clarify the student's own values; the teacher is necessarily committed to accepting and approving *all* values, no matter what the student may assert. Advocates contend that these approaches lead to the free development of personal values simply because, supposedly, no values are being imposed by the programs; only a valuation process is being imparted. Yet values are of course, imposed: the unflinching acceptance of all moral positions denies the existence of any moral absolutes as doggedly as fundamentalism, for example, insists upon them.

In the final analysis, education is first and foremost concerned with the evolution of a child's mind from the narrow confines of his limited experience to the comprehensive awareness of the mature

adult. Education provides more than practical skills and stores of information; it shapes a child's image of himself and his relation to the world within and without. Education cannot be value-neutral. Inevitably, he who educates the child has a profound impact on the spiritual-intellectual development of the adult individual.

Jefferson's Wall

Our schools play a critical role in the development of our future citizenry. As we have tried to show, all education—religious or secular, public or private—forms the inner man. If we draw this fact to its logical conclusion we see that public education gives government the means to mold an entire population. Taken to its drastic extreme, this invites psychological and spiritual tyranny. Mann, Dewey, Skinner, and others provide us with examples of how different philosophies, centrally imposed through the classroom, can color the world outlook of entire generations. For government to have the right through public schools to determine the content of education in this way is surely not compatible with democracy.

Some readers may object to these conclusions, pointing to the fact that people are free to send their children to nonpublic schools. However, few recognize the monopoly public schools have on educational funds. The reality is that the large majority of the population who cannot afford nonpublic tuition costs are forced to accept the values, goals, etc., of public schools. This situation has led one educational critic recently to conclude that "we are dangerously near a time when public schools could become, like public housing or public jails, places where the poor are confined against their will."[34] Indeed, such a time has arrived for the poor and much of the middle class as well. "The state has created a category of parents who, solely by reason of their economic status, must subject their children to upwards of six hours a day of state-approved socialization they would (or may) not have chosen for themselves."[35]

This situation becomes more striking when we keep in mind that "the public" is never educated; people are. Individual people with faces, names, and the right to their own beliefs, values, and goals sit in schoolroom chairs. Public education has secured itself in American society primarily by virtue of its claim to unify the masses, but the masses are composed of sovereign and dignified individuals. Any government attempt to enforce, either overtly or covertly, a unity of or a uniformity within American society can do so only by violating the inviolable domain of the individual mind. In his concurrence in

Thomas v. Collins, Supreme Court Justice Jackson wrote, "The very purpose of the First Amendment is to foreclose public authority from assuming guardianship of the public mind. . . . "[36] This is not to say that public funds should be withheld from universal education; it is rather to say that the government has no right to determine what that education should be.

To object that individuals *do* have a say in the running of the public schools by way of the ballot is to misconstrue the issue. No group, whether federal, state, or local, has the right to determine what educational philosophies, psychologies, curricula, goals, methods, and/or values any individual is to experience in school. These questions are matters of the individual mind; they are of a spiritual-intellectual not sociopolitical nature. Some may claim that if these matters are indeed within the domain of an individual's conscience, then individual children, not their parents, are the ones to make the final decisions. To permit children to assume such responsibilities, however, would burden them with questions beyond the scope of their intellectual framework and experience and subject them to chaos and confusion in the name of freedom. Children thus empowered would fall easy prey to all manner of educational fraud and deception, presented to them in appealing form like cereal or candy commercials. Children need guidance; to leave them without it would be the height of irresponsibility.

The question centers on whether the child is primarily a family member or a ward of the state. The Supreme Court's answer is clear. In Pierce v. Society of Sisters the Court ruled, "The child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations."[37] The famous Yoder case, as we shall see, also strengthens the notion of the parents' right to guide the education of their children.

Thomas Jefferson wrote of a wall that should separate church and state in order to protect man's "unalienable right" to determine his own convictions and the content of his mind. Because education is primarily a spiritual-intellectual process, we must conclude that it belongs on the church side of the wall. It is beyond the legal jurisdiction of the state to mandate the philosophy, curriculum, and methods of any and all schools.

A fundamental problem with our schools today is that we have failed to recognize this democratic imperative and mistakenly

presume that education falls under the jurisdiction of the state. We have come to define religion narrowly as "theism" and, so as to maintain the rightful separation between church and state, have eliminated everything from the classroom that has "theistic" overtones.

The distinction between secular and religious systems of belief have long been vague. The Supreme Court's ruling in Wisconsin v. Yoder illustrates the nebulous manner in which theistic doctrines are used to determine on which side of Jefferson's wall a particular issue falls. In this case the court ruled that Amish families could be exempted from a state education statute on the grounds that the public schools taught ideals and values contrary to the Amish faith. According to Justice Burger,

> [the public] high schools tend to emphasize intellectual and scientific accomplishment, self-distinction, competitiveness, worldly success, and social life with other students. Amish society emphasizes informal learning through doing, a life of "goodness" rather than a life of intellect, wisdom rather than technical knowledge, community welfare rather than competition, and separation from rather than integration with contemporary worldly society.[38]

The values cited by the court, however, do not pivot upon theistic beliefs, as Professor Arons points out. "Any non-Amish family might be equally committed to such values and see them as threatened by state-sponsored socialization in schools."[39] The sovereignty of the individual's mind is obviously not dependent upon the type of content it processes; to argue otherwise is to invite endless confusion.

The wall separating church and state stands upon the general notion that the content of a man's mind, his attempts to understand himself and the world about him, are generally outside the powers of the body politic. In a separate opinion on McGowan v. Maryland, Justices Frankfurter and Harlan stated that:

> The Establishment Clause withdrew from the sphere of legislative concern and competence a specific, but *comprehensive*, area of human conduct: *man's belief or disbelief in the verity of some transcendental idea and man's expression in action of that belief or disbelief.* Congress

> may not make these matters as such, the subject of legislation, nor, now, may any legislature in this country.[40] [Italics added]

Indeed, any tenets occupying a central place in the mind of man and guiding him through life need not be theistic to be called religious. We find this interpretation of religion reflected in the Supreme Court ruling in United States v. Seeger, where the court determined that the phrase "religious training and belief" may consist of "a sincere and meaningful belief which occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by God. . . . "[41] This may be the teachings of the Communist Manifesto as much as the teachings of the Bible.

The state is justified in interfering in the educational process, warns Professor Arons—and imposing "any substantial burden upon First Amendment rights"—only when it demonstrates "a compelling interest for doing so."[42] Such a justification may be found, for example, in "the state's interest, commanded by the Constitution itself, in insuring that children not be denied educational opportunity on the basis of race."[43]

The result of the often contradictory and ambiguous concept of the protected aspect of the human mind has been that educators have been permitted to impart various materialistic philosophies, because the values inherent in them are nontheistic. However, the inculcation in public schools of the materialistic beliefs and relativistic standards that derive from the views of Skinner and others are just as much in violation of the Establishment Clause as was the teaching of Mann's Protestant-oriented, biblically derived values. The fact that Mann based his "public philosophy" on a Supreme Being while our modern public philosophy denies God is irrelevant.

In his opinion on West Virginia v. Barnette, Supreme Court Justice Jackson wrote:

> Probably no deeper division of our people could proceed from any provocation than from finding it necessary to choose what doctrine and whose program public education officials shall compel youth to unite in embracing. The ultimate futility of such attempts to compel coherence is the lesson of every such effort. . . . Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard.[44]

Whenever government intrudes upon the sphere of intellect and spirit, which encompasses education, art, and science, as well as religion, the sovereignty of individual conscience is to some degree lost. And this sovereignty is the very basis of democracy. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan puts it,

> [the] gloomy prophesy that liberalism will be destroyed through the steady conquest of the private sector bids fair to come to pass here in the United States, and in no domain of our national life is this clearer or seemingly more inexorable than in education.[45]

Universal Independent Education

Deeply committed as we are by history and tradition to public schooling, private academies and parochial and independent schools have nevertheless come to assume a major and still growing role in the education of our young. That so many families—and by no means only the rich—are willing to assume the heavy financial burden of private school tuition is a measure of the value a growing segment of our population places on freedom of choice.

Yet private education as we know it, financially inaccessible to most, is not the answer to the dilemma. The solution lies rather in a system that combines the best features of both public and private sectors. Grant each public school the freedom and independence that its private counterpart enjoys, while giving private schools equal access to public funds, and a system of schooling emerges that will meet the needs of the nation without doing violence to the fundamental principles of democracy. Such a system is universal; it is open to all, as accessible as the public schools we now know. It would have to ensure equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of race, creed, or economic background. But being independent of government control, it protects the nation from centralized manipulation, leaving each family free to choose the education that best accords with its own outlook and ideals.

Such a universal independent educational system would be composed of schools espousing the most varied educational philosophies. Schools would be established by groups of teachers, business people, or interested parents and could be founded on anything from behavioristic tenets to formal religious ideals. Curricula and methods would be designed to suit each school's educational orientation. Families could thus choose the school that best met their

goals and the needs of their children.

A school system that offers the maximum of choice for families and complete independence for educators realizes fully the ideal of freedom of conscience. Such freedom encourages creativity. The competition it engenders promotes excellence. Diversity provides the opportunity for the emergence of a philosophic and spiritual consensus attuned to the true needs of the times.

It must be stressed that universal education is essential to a modern nation that respects and protects the rights of the individual. Horace Mann's words in justification of universal education are as true today as when he spoke them: "If a child has any claim to bread to keep him from perishing he has a far higher claim to knowledge to preserve him from error and its fearful retinue of calamities."[46]

Some might maintain that if education indeed belongs in the sphere of intellect and spirit and hence is the province of the private man, then the public has no duty to support it. Such a conclusion, however, would be erroneous. The economic, social, and political well-being of a nation depends upon an educated populace. It is indeed in the public interest to support universal education. Moreover, a person is not *either* a sovereign individual *or* a citizen. As both individual *and* citizen, each person lives in two spheres: one in which his individual conscience prevails, and another in which the body politic has power. As citizen, I am obligated to support universal education for the good of the body politic; as individual, I have the right to choose my children's education, without being told what that education should be.

Public funding for a universal independent educational system is our responsibility if we have the weal of both our young and our nation at heart. Methodologies for achieving it are now increasingly the subject of debate. So far, potential solutions have foundered on allegations of supposed infringement of First Amendment guarantees. In truth, however, it is present government control over education that violates our constitutionally protected freedom of conscience, while a truly independent educational system would be fully in tune with the intent of the First Amendment. There is no reason why a satisfactory method of public funding should not be devised once this distinction is clearly perceived. However difficult a task this may prove to be, it is one we must undertake if education is to serve as a pillar of American democracy.

Footnotes

1. E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered,* Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, New York, 1973, p. 72.
2. Horace Mann, "Twelfth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," Dutton and Wentworth, State Printers, Boston, 1848, p. 135.
3. Mann, Report X, pp. 125-126.
4. 319 U.S. at 642.
5. 310 U.S. at 296.
6. Stephen Arons, "The Separation of School and State: Pierce Reconsidered," *Harvard Educational Review,* p. 46 (Feb. 1976), p. 95.
7. *Ibid.,* pp. 91-92.
8. Frederick Grimke, *The Nature and Tendency of Free Institutions,* ed. John Ward, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1968, p. 364.
9. Robert Ulich (ed), *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom,* 2nd ed., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p. 467.
10. Richard Pratte, *The Public School Movement,* David McKay Company, Inc., New York, 1973, p. 43.
11. Mann, Report XI, p. 135.
12. Mann, Report XII, p. 84.
13. Mann, Report I, p. 56.
14. Mann, Report XII, p. 138.
15. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty,* G.P. Putnam Sons, New York, 1960, p. 304.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 306.
17. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* The Free Press, New York, 1966, p. 248.
18. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature,* Open Court, La Salle, 1971, p. 323.
19. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* p. 243.
20. John Dewey, "Theory of Valuation," *Foundations of the Unity of Science,* Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap and Charles Morris (eds), University of Chicago Press, Chicago in London, 1970, p. 446.
21. John Dewey, *A Common Faith,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1969, p. 33.
22. John Dewey, *Characters and Events: Popular Essays in Social and Political Philosophy,* Joseph Ratner (ed), Octagon Books, New York, 1970, Vol. II, pp. 504-505.

23. Edgar B. Gumbert and Joel Spring, *The Super School and the Superstate: American Education in the Twentieth Century,* 1918-1970, Studies on the History of American Education Series, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1977, p. 75.

24. Henry J. Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education,* 1865-1965, Random House, New York, 1968, p. 68.

25. Pratte, *The Public School Movement,* p. 62.

26. Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea,* p. 203.

27. *The Encyclopedia of Education,* Macmillan and Free Press, New York, Vol. III, p. 516.

28. David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order,* Rontledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980, p. XIV.

29. B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity,* Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1971, pp. 199-200.

30. John L. Childs, *Education and Morals,* Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1950, p. 16.

31. *Ibid.,* p. 17.

32. *Ibid.,* p. 19.

33. Philip N. Phenix, *Education and the Common Good,* Harper & Row, New York, 1961, p. 18.

34. John Egerton, "The Goals of Education Must Have a Fair Trial," *Education Week,* September 8, 1982, p. 22, col. 5.

35. Arons, "The Separation of School and State," p. 101.

36. Thomas v. Collins, 323, U.S. at 545 (Jackson, J., concurring) (1944).

37. 268 U.S. at 510.

38. 406 U.S. at 210.

39. Arons, "The Separation of School and State," p. 84.

40. 366 U.S. at 465-6 (Frankfurter, J. separate opinion in which Harlan, J. joins) (1961).

41. 380 U.S. at 163.

42. Arons, "The Separation of School and State," p. 103.

43. *Ibid.*

44. 319 U.S. at 641.

45. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Government and the Ruin of Private Education," *Harper's,* April, 1978, p. 29.

46. Mann, Report X, p. 124.

Publications Available from The Myrin Institute
136 East 64th Street, New York, New York 10021

Books

	Hard Cover	Soft Cover
Man: The Bridge Between Two Worlds by Franz E. Winkler	—	$4.95
For Freedom Destined: Mysteries of Man's Evolution in the Mythology of Wagner's Ring Operas and Parsifal by Franz E. Winkler	$7.95	$5.95
Can the Red Man Help the White Man? ed. by Sylvester M. Morey	—	$3.50
Respect for Life: The Traditional Upbringing of American Indian Children ed. by Sylvester M. Morey and Olivia L. Gilliam	—	$4.95
The Recovery of Man in Childhood by A.C. Harwood	—	$7.95
Laboratory Investigations in Human Physiology by George K. Russell	—	$15.95

Proceedings

No. 1 Seminar on Comparative Education: Islamic Values in Education & The Liberal Arts Tradition

No. 2 The Influence of Psychology on Education
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 3 The Scientific Spirit of Inquiry*
by Russell W. Davenport

No. 4 Portrait of a Waldorf School
by A.C. Harwood

No. 5 Man's Mathematical Mind: from Thales to Wiener
by John Kreitner

No. 6 The Scientific and the Moral in Education
by L. Francis Edmunds

No. 7 National Psychology in International Relations
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 8 The Psychology of Leadership
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 9 The Cleavage between Intellectual and Spiritual Life
by Robert Ulich

The Battle That Was Not Fought
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 10 The Map of Childhood
by A.C. Harwood
(Now available only in the book, The Recovery of Man in Childhood. See above.)

No. 11 Man: The Bridge Between Two Worlds (A chapter from...)
by Franz E. Winkler
(Now available only in the book, Man: The Bridge Between Two Worlds. See above.)

No. 12 Reflections on Discipline
by John F. Gardner

No. 13 American Indians and Our Way of Life
by Sylvester M. Morey

No. 14 The Experience of Knowledge
by John F. Gardner

No. 15 Intuition, Intellect and the Racial Question
by Laurens van der Post

No. 16 The Mythology in Wagner's "Rhinegold"
by Franz E. Winkler
(Now available only in the book, For Freedom Destined. See above.)

No. 17 America in Foreign Affairs
by Cornelis H. DeJong

No. 18 Towards a Truly Public Education
by John F. Gardner

No. 19 The Mythology in Wagner's "Valkyrie" and "Siegfried"
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 20 The Mythology in Wagner's "Twilight of the Gods"
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 21 The Mythology in Wagner's "Parsifal"
by Franz E. Winkler

No. 22 Right Action, Right Thinking
by John F. Gardner

No. 23 One's Man Vision: In Memoriam, H.A.W. Myrin

No. 24 The Secret of Peace and The Environmental Crisis
by John F. Gardner

No. 25 The Role of Technology in the Modern World
by Frederick J. Kreitner

No. 26 Love and the Illusion of Love
by John F. Gardner

No. 27 The Blind in Society and Blindness, A New Seeing of the World
by Jacques Lusseyran

No. 28 The Idea of Man in America
by John F. Gardner

No. 29 Marihuana Today
by George K. Russell

No. 30 Against the Poliution of the I
by Jacques Lusseyran

No. 31 The Poverty of a Rich Society
by John F. Gardner

No. 32 Melville's Vision of America
by John F. Gardner

No. 33 The Agricultural Crisis: A Crisis of Culture
by Wendell Berry

No. 34 A Bill of Rights for Future Generations
by Jacques-Yves Cousteau

No. 35 The Study of Life: A Naturalist's View
by R.D. Lawrence

No. 36 Perspectives on the Educational Use of Animals
by Mayer, Neil, Orlans and Russell

No. 37 Humanism in Education
by Patricia Brown

No. 38 In Fear of Freedom: Public Education and Democracy in America
by Jeffrey Kane

*Currently out of print

Proceedings are sold in bookstores around the country. They are directly available from the Myrin Institute for a suggested contribution of $3 or more to cover the cost of printing and mailing.

Pamphlets

About Marijuana by Franz E. Winkler	$ .50
What Is An Alcoholic? by George W. McCarthy	$ .50
Vivisection and the True Aims of Education in Biology by George K. Russell	$ .75
Marijuana Reappraised: Two Personal Accounts by Martin Croes and Andre McNicoll	$1.00

Contributions Welcomed

The Myrin Institute is supported by voluntary contributions. If you are interested in its work and care to make a gift, large or small, it will be gratefully received. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Write: The Myrin Institute, 136 East 64th Street, New York, New York 10021.